

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

September 27, 2022
1:15 PM

NRCS State Office Building B Training Room
3727 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Jason Nolde lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander.

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV
Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice-Chairman, Area V
Mr. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Member
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Alternate
Mr. Benson Langlinais, Area IV Alternate
Dr. Thomas Vitrano, Area V Alternate

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Mr. Reggie Skains, Area I Member
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

Approval of the agenda

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the September 27, 2022 SSWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Jason Nolde

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the August 23, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said August's Farm Bill drawdown was \$27,655. The total FY 21-22 remaining balance is \$39,248 with one month remaining. A total of 30 districts have used all their allocated Farm Bill funds for the current year. These maxed-out districts have continued to submit Farm Bill hours worked for a total of \$484,120 beyond their allocations. OSWC has requested a response from the remaining districts on whether they will draw all their remaining funds. Once the unused farm bill funds have been totaled, they will be distributed to the over earned districts.

2022 LACD Mid-Year Meeting

Mr. Nolde said there was great participation and attendance at this year's Mid-Year meeting. All the suggested committee topics that were brought up are shaping the 2023 LACD Annual meeting to be another great experience. Mr. Kacir suggested that maybe one of the LACD officers should consider attending another state annual meeting to get ideas for Louisiana's meeting. Mr. Nolde said he wouldn't mind attending one if he had some availability. Chairman Garber said LACD should work on ideas to keep attendees around on the last day of the meeting or maybe consider making it a 2-day meeting. Mr. Horvath suggested that LACD try a cash drawing as an incentive. Ms. Sharbeno suggested that Ethics training be held earlier on the last day and have Supervisor Training end the day at noon. Mr. Breaux said we should step into this year's LACD meeting taking a closer view of things and make suggestions on how things could be better for the 2024 annual meeting.

NACD South Central Meeting Report- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SWCC

Mr. Breaux said the NACD South Central Region meeting went very well. Participants from both tours enjoyed their experiences and learned a lot. NACD has suggested replicating a few of the tours and presentations for the national meeting. Chairman Garber said he enjoyed Commissioner Mike Strain's presentation and many of the participants enjoyed his presentation as well.

NACD Annual Meeting-- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SWCC

Mr. Breaux said that the 2023 NACD Annual Meeting planning is well under way. The 2023 NACD Annual Meeting is scheduled to be held on February 11-15, 2023 at the New Orleans Marriot in New Orleans, LA. Registration, Sponsorship Opportunities, Breakout Session proposal applications, and Tour information can be found on NACD's website. Early Bird Registration ends: December 23, 2022, Reserve your room by: January 20, 2023.

Area V SWCC Election Convention

Chairman Garber said Area V districts received notices regarding the upcoming SWCC Area 5 Election Convention scheduled for Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at 11:00 AM. Area V Districts have been submitting their delegates and alternates as directed. The deadline for submittal of delegates and alternates from Area V districts is October 10, 2022. The districts must make sure that their delegate or alternate attend the election convention on October 25. Currently, Mr. Steve Horvath serves on the SWCC as the Area V delegate and Dr. Thomas Vitrano as the alternate.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received 4 SWCD CPA Agreements:

- Caddo SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- D'Arbonne SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$650.
- Lower Delta SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- Upper Delta SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these engagement requests:

- Caddo SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- D'Arbonne SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$650.
- Lower Delta SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- Upper Delta SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist

Mr. Kacir said NRCS has advertised vacancies for Soil Conservationists, Technicians, and a few engineers. Ms. Candice Voorhies who previously worked with LA NRCS is returning to become the Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships. Mr. Scott Edwards, State Conservationist in Missouri, previously held this position which helps to maintain and gain new agreements for NRCS. Ms. Sharonte Williams, Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations, is going to the Office of Urban Conservation, creating a vacancy in the ASCFO position. Ms. Amy Robertson Fusilier recently transferred to FPAC Headquarters and Mr. Alex Felter has joined NRCS Louisiana to fill her vacant position as State Public Affairs Specialist. Mr. Kacir said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby mentioned FSA received \$5 billion towards loan costs (\$3 billion towards disaster relief loans and \$2 million towards historically underserved loans). The application process for the loans will not be easy. Chairman Garber asked Mr. Kacir if he had more details about the Inflation Reduction Act. Mr. Kacir said he wasn't sure of the details but would hope that the 70 companies that have already been approved would assist others with their application process. Mr. Breaux said Mr. Scott Manley wrote one for the US Rice Stewardship program and they were approved and received funds. Mr. Manley would be a good source to reach out for assistance with the application process. Chairman Garber said this topic could be a great breakout session for 2023's LACD Annual meeting if we hear of more details.

Mr. Nolde said SWCC members should have received a letter from Calcasieu SWCD asking for assistance from U.S. Congressman Mike Johnson in amending the "Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act to include local soil and water conservation districts. The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act was introduced in 2017 and was an amended version of the Agricultural Act of 2014 to clarify forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services under good neighbor agreements.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve writing a letter to Senator Johnson asking for his help in amending the Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act to include soil and water conservation districts.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

OSWC Report- Ag NPS Abatement Program

Chairman Garber said that Mr. Skains suggested that the OSWC present a report to the Commission to give an idea of the different programs that OSWC assists with. Mr. Schooler shared his report about the LDAF Ag NPS Abatement Program's active projects. (See attached).

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 2 re-appointments this month:

- Mr. Reggie Skains, D'Arbonne SWCD, appointed position, effective November 18, 2022- November 18, 2025.
- Mr. Stephen "Burt" Lensing, East Carroll SWCD, appointed position, effective October 23, 2022- October 23, 2025.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the re-appointments of:

- Mr. Reggie Skains, D'Arbonne SWCD, appointed position, effective November 18, 2022- November 18, 2025.
- Mr. Stephen "Burt" Lensing, East Carroll SWCD, appointed position, effective October 23, 2022- October 23, 2025.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said we have 1 appointment this month:

- Mr. Louis Clay Brignac, Evangeline SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Walter Tortorich, effective September 27, 2022- March 24, 2024.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the appointments of:

- Mr. Louis Clay Brignac, Evangeline SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Walter Tortorich, effective September 27, 2022- March 24, 2024.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Benson Langlais

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Climate Smart Commodities listing
- From the ADMC: Barriers to adoption of conservation drainage practices
- Feral hogs, black flies, topic of AgCenter-hosted meeting
- Rice Stewardship Partnership receives \$80 Million from USDA
- How Can I Tell if the Water Cycle is Broken (and what can I do to Fix it?)

Commission Goals- Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman of SWCC

Chairman Garber said during the last Commission meeting, members discussed a list of draft SWCC goals. The sheet lists 3 main topics (Supervisor and Personnel Management, District Operational Funding, and Program Development) that he would like for the Commission members to review and discuss. The Supervisor and Personnel Management session was discussed during August's SWCC meeting. The next section is the "District Operational Funding". With district insurance increases and new fees for payroll, districts should be working on getting more funding to their districts. Mr. Breaux encourages districts to update their grassroots reports so these reports can be shown to legislators. It is important for districts to reach out legislators before the session begins. In previous years, copies of the Grassroots reports were also given to the Commissioner, and he kept multiple copies from each district in a binder for when he ran into legislators who asked about or otherwise mentioned their local districts. Conservation districts were mentioned more frequently on the Capital floor than ever during last year's session, and now is the perfect time to follow up on that. Districts should also consider asking their cooperators to also reach out legislators on behalf of the conservation district program.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

Adjournment

Chairman Garber said if there was no other business or comments from the public or Commission members, He will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to adjourn at 3:12 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.



/s/

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission